



EPA Orders Emergency Removal of Chemicals

National Lacquer and Paint Co.

Chicago, Illinois

October 2003

Additional information

For additional information about this site, please contact either of the EPA team members listed below:

Samuel Borries

On Scene Coordinator
Emergency Response
Branch (SE-5J)

EPA Region 5

77 West Jackson Blvd.

Chicago, IL 60604

Phone: (312) 353-8360

borries.samuel@epa.gov

Janet Pope

Community Involvement
Coordinator

Office of Public Affairs
(P-19J)

EPA Region 5

77 W. Jackson Blvd.

Chicago, IL 60604

Phone: (312) 353-0628 or

(800) 621-8431, ext. 60628

Fax: (312) 353-1155

pope.janet@epa.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 has ordered the owners of the former National Lacquer and Paint Co. property in southwest Chicago to remove leaking containers holding hazardous chemicals. If the property owners don't quickly comply with the emergency legal order, EPA will do the cleanup and then seek reimbursement from the owners for the cost. Inspectors recently determined the site at 7411 - 7431 S. Green St., between West 74th and West 75th streets, posed an immediate threat to public health and the environment. The factory is bordered by homes and commercial businesses.

The factory grounds and several dilapidated buildings on it are littered with thousands of rusting and leaking tanks, drums and buckets containing paint, waste solvents, acids and resins. Many of the chemicals pose an explosion or fire hazard, especially when mixed. And inspectors found many of the substances are stored together and the leaking liquids are intermingling. Inspectors also encountered dangerous fumes inside the buildings. Neighborhood residents told EPA they observed children setting off fireworks on the site during the Fourth of July holiday. Inspectors also found evidence of drug and alcohol use on the premises.

Removal will take about 90 days

In EPA language, the legal order is being done as a "time-critical removal action." Under federal law, EPA has the authority to step in and take emergency action when it's judged that uncontrolled hazardous wastes pose a major threat to the public. Chicago Department of Environment was unsuccessful in forcing property owners to clean up the hazardous wastes. The city environmental office and Illinois EPA then asked EPA to intervene.



Dozens of buckets lined up outside the factory are leaking their contents.

EPA ordered the property owners to hire an approved contractor to remove about 10,000 containers ranging in size from one-ton totes down to laboratory bottles. EPA also wants about 70 large tanks, vats and pits drained and cleaned or demolished. The contractors will also remove debris from inside the six, two-story brick buildings and outside in the courtyards and shipping areas. The contractors will also cover broken windows, dismantle dangerous structures and test the ground for soil contamination. EPA said fortunately most of the chemicals were stored on concrete floors, which probably stopped most of the leaks from seeping into the ground. EPA said the removal work should take about 90 days to complete. The owners only have a few weeks to comply with the emergency order. EPA wants the cleanup work started this fall.

Site was paint and lacquer business for decades

National Lacquer and Paint Co. manufactured paint and lacquer on the site for more than 40 years. The company operated until 1995 when National Lacquer and Paint Co. was dissolved and the property sold to National Lacquer Co. Inc. That company operated a paint-stripping and paint-pigment packaging business. Capital Tax Corp. recently acquired portions of the property through a tax auction.

The Chicago Department of Environment and Chicago Fire Department first investigated complaints about the site in 1997. Inspectors found hazardous conditions with leaking, flammable liquids and improperly stored chemicals. The owners hired an environmental firm to clean up the property, but another inspection in 1998 revealed continuing problems. The violations included a leaking warehouse roof that was letting in rain, which washed chemicals off the floor and into the street. Other violations were leaking pails and a sub-basement found partially filled with what was believed to be the overflow from vats of the stripper chemical methylene chloride.

In April 2002, a factory manager called Chicago police to the property and complained that Capital Tax Corp. was moving drums of hazardous material from its part of the property over to the portion owned by National Lacquer Co. and spilling chemicals in the process. In June 2002, the Chicago Building Department ordered all work at the entire site to stop due to code violations and posted closure notices on doors. When EPA inspectors arrived in July 2003, they found the site badly deteriorated with holes in the roof and doors, leaky, rusty containers holding dangerous chemicals, and big uncovered vats, tanks and pits partially filled with unknown liquids.

EPA wants to hear from you

EPA plans to hold a neighborhood meeting on

Tuesday, Sept. 23 at 7 p.m.

at the Holy House of Prayer Baptist Church

815 W. 74th St., Chicago

where residents can discuss the situation and ask questions.

The cleanup will not pose any hazards to neighborhood residents. Most of the work will be hidden behind a brick wall surrounding much of the factory. You may occasionally see workers in protective clothing move in and out. All work will occur during daytime hours. The environmental contractor doing the cleanup will take steps to minimize noise and dust.

EPA needs your help to keep the site secure. Chicago police have agreed to increase patrols by the site, but if you see children or trespassers enter the property please call the authorities.



Inspectors in protective suits examine a large tank partially full of liquid. One of the tank's portals was found completely open.

**EPA Orders Emergency
Cleanup of Paint Factory
Neighborhood Meeting
Sept. 23 to Discuss
National Lacquer & Paint Co. Site
Chicago, Illinois
(Read Inside for More Details)**



United States Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604